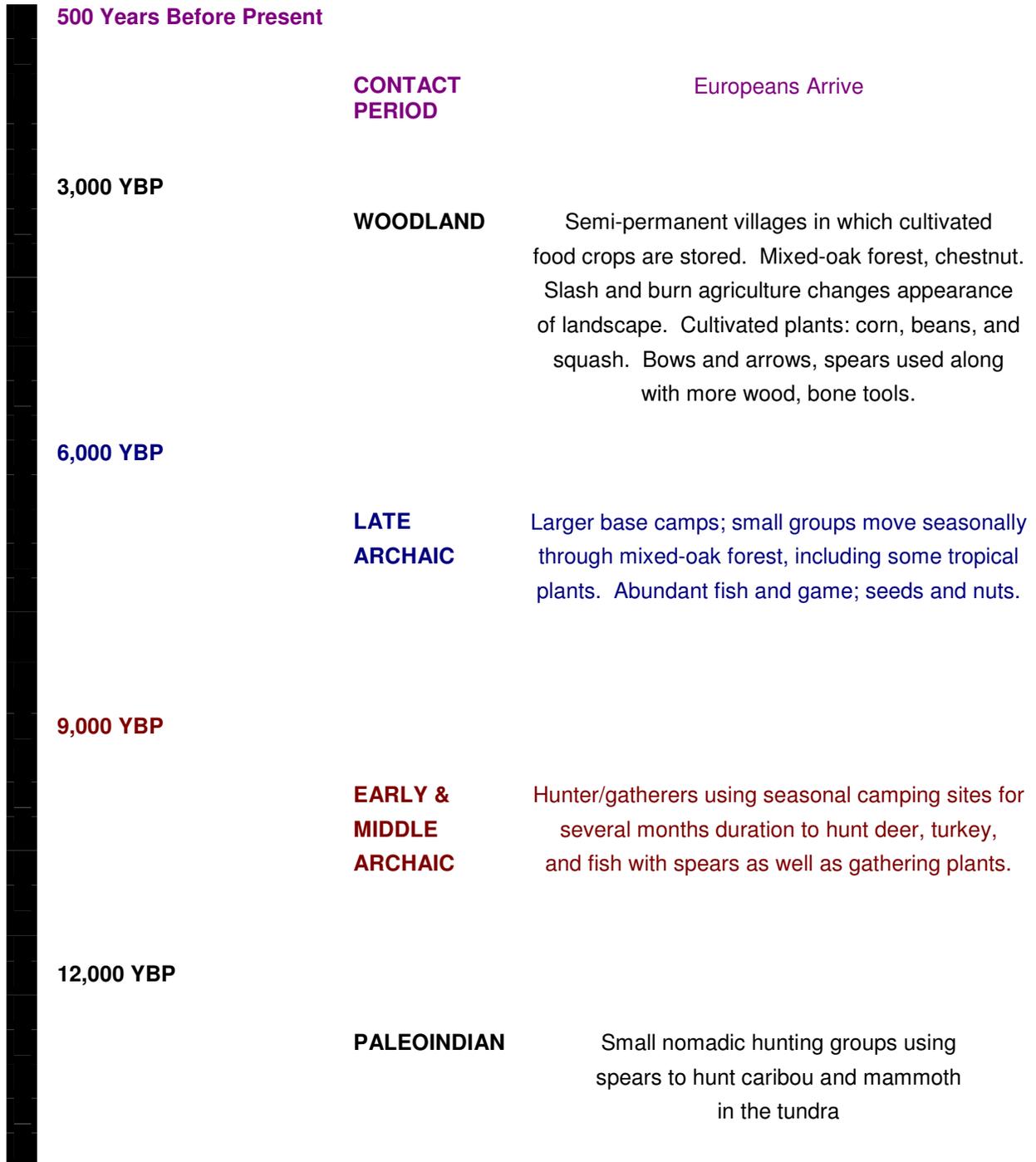


TIMELINE FROM ICE AGES TO EUROPEAN ARRIVAL IN NEW ENGLAND

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Traditional discussions of the occupation of New England by prehistoric peoples divide prehistory into three major periods: Paleoindian, Archaic and Woodland.

Paleoindian Period (12,000-9,000 BP)

The Paleoindian Period extended from approximately 12,000 years before present (BP) until 9,000 BP. During this era, people manufactured fluted projectile points. They hunted caribou as well as smaller animals found in the sparse, tundra-like environment. In other parts of the country, Paleoindian groups hunted larger Pleistocene mammals such as mastodon or mammoth. In New England there is no evidence that these mammals were utilized by humans as a food source.

People moved into New England after deglaciation of the region concluded around 14,000 BP. Radiocarbon dates place the first people in New England at 10,000 BP. As the ice retreated northwards, a harsh and unforgiving environment resulted. The people who subsisted in the cold tundra were hardy by necessity. Since resources were found in patches across the landscape, only small mobile groups could survive.

Archaeological evidence dating to the Paleoindian period is found in New England but is more common to the Southwestern United States.



Drawing Courtesy of C. Keith Wilbur

Archaic Period (9,000-3,000 BP)

During the Archaic Period, humans adapted to an evolving temperate forest, which flourished after a warming trend in New England. These groups had access to a wide range of resources including deer, an important dietary staple.



The forest was thick with mammals including otter, beaver, rabbit, squirrel, and turkey as well as other edible species. In the Archaic Period, aquatic resources were also important. The people fished in riverine, lacustrine (lake) and ocean environments. They also collected shellfish.

Drawing Courtesy of C. Keith Wilbur

NATIVE AMERICAN
FISHING SITE ON THE
CONNECTICUT RIVER.
THE ENTIRE
CONNECTICUT RIVER IS
CHANNELED THROUGH
THIS WATERFALL
LOCATED IN TURNER'S
FALLS, MA, ON THE
STRETCH OF THE RIVER
BETWEEN THE DAM
AND THE MOUTH OF
THE DEERFIELD RIVER.
THIS IS STILL A PRIME
FISHING SITE FOR SHAD.

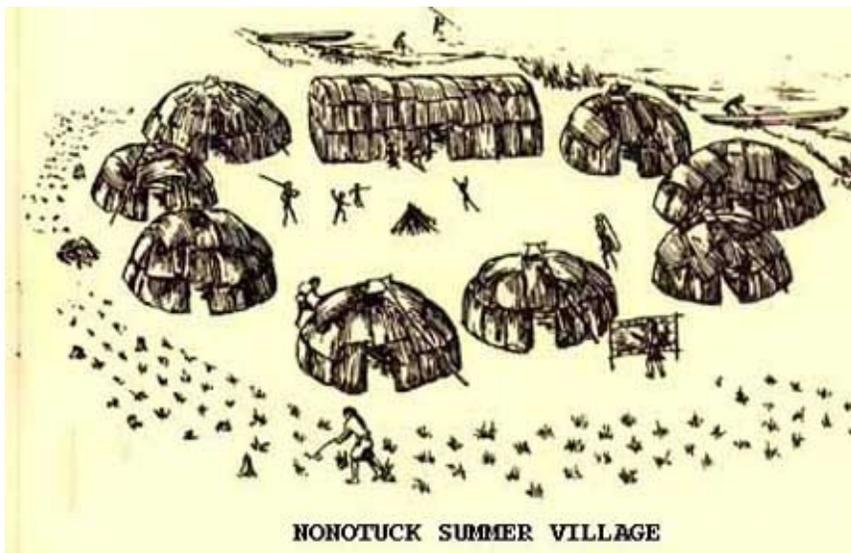


The wide range of resources is reflected in the diversity of tools dating to the Archaic Period. Many variable shapes and sizes of projectile points are noted, likely the result of the variety of tool functions required. Evidence also suggests that birch bark containers as well as soapstone (steatite) bowls were manufactured.

People lived in seasonal camps. They hunted animals and gathered plants as defined by the time of year. During this time period, the population began to increase. This is probably a result of the increased number of resources available and a trend toward more settled lifestyles. Ceremonialism, in the form of planned burial, became more common in the Archaic Period.

The Archaic Period is broken into three phases, the Early Archaic (9,000-8,000 BP), the Middle Archaic (8,000-6,000 BP) and the Late Archaic (6,000-3,000 BP). Paleoindian and Early Archaic finds are among the earliest in New England.

Woodland Period (3,000-400 BP)



The Woodland Period dates to between 3,000 BP and contact with European émigrés in the 17th century AD (400 BP). Woodland peoples lived in semi-permanent villages, where they exploited the many resources available since Archaic times.

Drawing Courtesy of C. Keith Wilbur

They also cultivated plants. Since approximately 1,000 BP, Woodland peoples practiced "slash and burn" farming. They cultivated many plant types including maize, beans, squash and other formerly wild species such as *Chenopodium album* (commonly called Lamb's Quarters, White Goosefoot, or Pigweed). The need to tend crops necessitated a sedentary lifestyle, at least until the plants were harvested. Subsurface storage areas were constructed as well. Stable food supplies and increased settlement permanence led to a population increase.

Archaeological and historical evidence suggests that Woodland era sites consisted of large villages and smaller peripheral sites surrounded by agricultural fields. Many of the small peripheral sites were occupied to take advantage of seasonally available food and to seek lithic and other raw materials for tool manufacture.

Contemporary with farming, pottery manufacture developed around 1,000 BP in New England. These cooking and storage vessels replaced soapstone variants. Projectile point types remain variable, but streamline to triangular types by the Contact Period (17th century AD). Cultural identity is evident in artifact designs. Warfare among Woodland people was prevalent. The Woodland Period is broken down into two phases, Early/Middle Woodland (3,000-1,200 BP) and Late Woodland (1,200-400 BP). Woodland archaeological sites are quite large and are frequently found across New England.

Contact Period (17th Century)

Prehistory ends with the coming of Europeans in the 17th century and the introduction to history in written documents. Initially, relations between Indians and Europeans were amicable. This situation was short-lived. As settlers encroached on Indian lands, resources and culture, relationships deteriorated.

Several altercations took place during the Contact Period. These include: King Philip's War (1675-1676), Queen Anne's War (early 1700's), Father Ralle's War (1724), King George's War (1743-1748), the French and Indian War (1754-1763), as well as many others.

Prior to war, the Indians traded with the Europeans. Copper projectile points and cooking vessels became desired items. Other raw materials, such as glass, were offered to the Indians by the Europeans. Huge networks were established to trade fur. Wampum was mass produced.

In time, the Europeans forced the Indians off their lands. After two centuries worth of battle, many Indians moved out of New England. They chose to live with other groups, less affected by European presence. Some Indians stayed closer to home. They endured hardship at the hands of European settlers. In New England, descendants of these Native Americans may still be found living close to ancestral lands.

Archaeologically, the Contact Period is identified by the presence of European style trade goods.



Drawing Courtesy of C. Keith Wilbur

References:

Wilbur, C. Keith. 1978. *The New England Indians*. The Globe Pequot Press. Chester, Connecticut.

This document was adapted from a webpage. For the original go to:
www.bio.umass.edu/biology/conn.river/prehis.html